

Keeping America's Highways Safe

OPERATION ABC MOBILIZATION
November 19-25, 2001

FACT SHEET

- Motor vehicle crashes kill an average of 115 people every day.¹
- Crashes injure an average of 8,737 people every day, including 195 children under 5 years old.²
- Nearly half of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes last year weren't using seat belts or secured in child safety seats.³
- Average inpatient costs for crash victims who weren't using seat belts are 55 percent higher than for those who were belted.⁴
- Traffic crashes are unexpected and can happen at any moment-close to home, on your way to work or while driving children to activities.
- Seat belts and child safety seats protect health and save lives. They firmly restrain occupants inside the vehicle during a crash, preventing them from being ejected and from hitting the inside of the vehicle and other occupants.
- Seat belts should always be worn in a motor vehicle, even one equipped with air bags. Air bags are supplemental protection and are not designed to be used by themselves.
- Children 12 and under should always ride properly secured in the back seat. The front seat is a more dangerous spot. Front air bags deployed in even minor fender-benders have seriously hurt and even killed some children.
- In fatal crashes last year, 56 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants who didn't use seat belts or child safety seats were killed, more than double the percentage of occupants killed who did use restraints (27 percent).²
- Ejection from a vehicle is one of the most injurious events that can happen to a person in a crash. In year 2000 fatal crashes, 75 percent of passenger car occupants who were totally ejected from the vehicle were killed.⁵
- Seat belts can prevent total ejections: in 2000, only 1 percent of the occupants reported to have been using seat belts were totally ejected, compared with 22 percent of the unrestrained occupants.⁵
- Lap and shoulder belts reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent. For light truck occupants, the belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60 percent and moderate-to critical injury by 65 percent.⁴



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- In 2000, of infants (less than 1 year old) who were in a passenger vehicle involved in a fatal crash, 78 percent of those who were in a child safety seat survived, compared with 49 percent of those who were unrestrained.²
- Child safety seats reduce fatal injury by 71 percent for infants and by 54 percent for toddlers (1-4 years old) in passenger cars. For infants and toddlers in light trucks, the seats reduce fatal injury by 58 percent and 59 percent, respectively.⁴
- Every child should be restrained in a child safety seat or a booster seat until they turn 8 years old, unless they are at least 4 feet 9 inches tall.

¹ Traffic Safety Facts 2000 - Overview. NHTSA.

² 2000 Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Fatality and Injury Estimates, NHTSA

³ 2000 Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Fatality and Injury Estimates, NHTSA (17,672 unrestrained occupant fatalities = 49% of 36,249 total occupant fatalities).

⁴ Traffic Safety Facts - Overview (citing 1996 NHTSA Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System study)

⁵ Traffic Safety Facts 2000 - Occupant Protection



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TALKING POINTS

- After the heinous terrorist attacks on September 11 this year, safety has become a high priority for more people-and highway traffic safety has become even more vital.
- With many travelers opting to drive this holiday season, more people than ever are expected to crowd the nation's highways. That would mean more traffic and more motor vehicle crashes.
- With the increased potential for crashes this holiday season, making sure that people buckle up and use child safety seats is more important than ever.
- Seat belts should always be worn in a motor vehicle, even one equipped with air bags. Air bags are supplemental protection and are not designed to be used by themselves.
- When traveling on the roadways, remember - children 12 and under should always ride properly secured in the back seat. The front seat is a more dangerous spot. Front air bags deployed in even minor fender-benders have seriously hurt and even killed some children.
- Last year, more than 40,000 people lost their lives in crashes, an average of 115 people a day or one every 13 minutes.¹
- Nearly half of the vehicle occupants killed weren't using seat belts or child safety seats.²
- Law enforcement officers are committed to keeping our roads safe. We can help our officers do their job — and protect ourselves — by buckling up and using child safety seats.
- We can't avoid all the dangers we may face in these uncertain times, but buckling up and using child safety seats are things we can do to help ensure our safety.
- In fatal crashes last year, only 27 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants who used seat belts or child safety seats were killed, less than half the percentage of occupants killed who didn't use restraints (56 percent).³
- Every child should be restrained in a child safety seat or a booster seat until they turn 8 years old, unless they are at least 4 feet 9 inches tall.
- The Operation ABC (America Buckles up Children) Mobilization, which runs from November 19-25, is working with its law enforcement and highway safety partners to keep our highways safe by promoting the use of seat belts and child safety seats.

¹ Traffic Safety Facts 2000 - Overview. NHTSA.

² 2000 Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Fatality and Injury Estimates, NHTSA (17,672 unrestrained occupant fatalities = 49% of 36,249 total occupant fatalities).

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OP-ED ARTICLE – LONG VERSION

TAKING CONTROL OF OUR SAFETY - WITH SEAT BELTS

Much has changed since September 11. The vicious and cowardly terrorist attacks on our nation forced us all to think differently. Safety became more complicated. Even a mailbox could deliver terror.

But one thing that hasn't changed since September 11 is the need to keep our roads and highways safe and secure. If anything, it has become even more important at this busy time of the year. With many travelers now opting to drive, more people are expected to take to the highways this holiday season. That means more traffic and more congestion.

That might also mean more motor vehicle crashes. Last year, more than 40,000 people lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes, an average of 115 people a day or one every 13 minutes.¹ What's worse is that nearly half of the vehicle occupants killed weren't using seat belts or child safety seats.² This is tragic. But unlike so much in our lives these days, many of these deaths could have been easily prevented - by wearing a seat belt or using a child safety seat.

This holiday season, please consider taking one of the easiest safety measures you can - buckling up.

Our highways can be a deadly place. But our law enforcement agencies are continuing their longstanding commitment to keeping our nation's roads safe. Wearing a seat belt is the law in 49 states and the District of Columbia, laws traditionally enforced with extra vigor during the Operation ABC (America Buckles up Children) Mobilization in November. This year, Operation ABC will continue supporting the efforts of law enforcement across America with its campaign to make sure people wear their seat belts and secure their kids in child safety seats, booster seats or seat belts.

With your help, we are making progress. Last year, seat belt use in America hit 73 percent (insert State or local usage rate here) - and it could go higher this year.

Lives can be saved. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that lap and shoulder belts reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent.³ Child safety seats reduce fatal injury by 71 percent for infants and by 54 percent for toddlers (1-4 years old) in passenger cars.³ What's more, in fatal crashes last year, only 27 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants who used seat belts or child safety seats were killed, less than half the percentage of occupants killed who didn't use restraints (56 percent).⁴

Adults only need to secure themselves with a seat belt. But for children under eight years old, a child safety seat or booster seat should be used. (The one exception is the rare 8-year-old who is more than 4-feet 9-inches tall). Child safety seats should be used until a child is at least 40 pounds. After that, a booster seat should be used to position the seat belt properly until a child is 8 years old or 4-feet 9-inches tall. Booster seats and child safety seats are available at many large toy stores, discount chains and baby equipment stores.





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Using seat belts, booster seats and child safety seats not only makes law enforcement officers' job a lot easier, but it also gives us a practical way to take a stand for our own safety and that of our loved ones.

**Help avoid unnecessary tragedy this holiday season.
BUCKLE UP AMERICA.**

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² *2000 Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Fatality and Injury Estimates*, NHTSA (17,672 unrestrained occupant fatalities = 49% of 36,249 total occupant fatalities).

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⁴ *2000 Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Fatality and Injury Estimates*, NHTSA



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OP-ED ARTICLE – SHORT VERSION

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